



TACS COMMUNIQUE'

by Barry Haenisch, Executive Director
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WHOPPERS AND OTHER TALES

My wife and I live in a neighborhood with a lot of children. In fact, our next door neighbor has five children under eight years of age. It is a lovely family, and we love having them as neighbors. As you can imagine, the stay-at-home Mom has to have some time for herself, so some of the children are outside much of the day.

The little girl loves to be outside, and she loves to talk! Her name is Meadow, and she has discovered a way that she can hang over the fence that separates our yard from her yard. My wife likes to drink her morning coffee on the back porch, and quite often Meadow will "pop-up" on the fence and visit. Meadow has a vivid imagination, and she will regale my wife with tall-tales of her exploits. For instance, according to Meadow she is a super hero who can fly. Many of her stories begin with her flying to the roof of her house before detailing an adventure that she had.

Meadow is such a sweet little girl that my wife looks forward to her morning visits. When I come in from work in the afternoon, I might be met with a "guess where Meadow flew to today" statement. We both will smile as the story is retold. While we both know the story is not true, the outlandish things children sometime say can be cute.

This summer, TACS has been monitoring several hearings of House and Senate committees as they tackle the interim charges of the Speaker and the Lt. Governor. Most of the meetings follow a similar routine; testimony from individuals or groups who have been invited by the committee to speak and then opportunities for members of the audience to briefly address the committee. Most often the testimony provided to the committee members is helpful as the legislators grapple with a confusing or complex issue. Every now and again, however, a person's testimony is intended to push his/her own agenda regarding the topic. At those times the testimony can be as outlandish as Meadow's stories of flying...but it is certainly not as cute.

Most often when someone "stretches the truth" in testimony, another speaker later will try to correct it, but how does one put the untruth "back in the bottle"? Our friends who lead districts that are growing faster than their resources, are trying to do that right now. There is a group in Texas who prefer smaller government, and their strategy to accomplish it is to create barriers to bond elections. Regretfully, there are several legislators who share the same goal, and they seem to be uncaring that fast growing schools need every tool available to them to generate revenue to house and teach their ever expanding student bodies.

In a recent hearing, a proponent of expanding the ballot language for a bond election to include every possible shred of information about the needs of the district and its bonded indebtedness history provided an outlandish statistic. Regretfully, a representative of a state agency incorrectly told the committee that the statement was true. Hearing rules prohibited additional testimony that could have corrected the false information. So now our friends at the Fast Growth Schools Coalition are trying to squelch a lie that has had several days to simmer and grow! It is a hard thing to do, and it becomes even more difficult when some state leaders encourage and support the use of the big lie to further advance their political agendas. I wish I could say that this example is an isolated event, but I cannot truthfully say that. In fact, it is a tactic used by the school choice supporters, citizens and legislators, to push their voucher agenda before the legislature. It's true. An exaggeration when told by a child is cute, but when it is told by an adult with devious intentions, it can have devastating consequences!

As we prepare for the State of Texas 85th Legislative Session, the governmental relations team at TACS will work cooperatively with a host of other “friends” to support good legislation for schools and to oppose legislation that will hurt you and/or your work. However, the time for superintendents to become actively involved in the political process is long overdue. Honest and frank conversations with your representative and senator about how proposed legislation affects your students is the most effective advocacy there is. As former Speaker of the House Pete Laney told a gathering of teachers this summer, “Your legislators work for you. You don’t work for them. Sometimes they forget that!” I will add, however, that they have to hear from you to know what you want. **SPEAK UP!!**

ADOPT-A-SCHOOL?

School leaders can use all of the hands they can get to help them meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of the students who are in their schools. As the number of low socio-economic students in our state grows, school resources are stretched thin trying to meet the needs. A non-profit, **PASTORS FOR TEXAS CHILDREN**, has been on the scene for three years trying to be a difference maker in the lives of students, teachers, and schools.

As local pastors begin to see their churches’ mission expanding beyond the doors of the church, some are realizing that foreign countries are not the only mission fields in need of their help. Some churches are beginning to discover the mission field that is often across the street from their sanctuary, their local public school.

Church members are realizing that they can support their children and teachers in myriad ways. From writing notes of encouragement to teachers, to volunteering to tutor a child or to read to a class on a regular basis, to bringing snacks or lunches to the teachers’ workroom, to any number of other ways, church members, with the encouragement of their pastors, can make a difference in your school.

If your schools have needs, and you would like a helping hand to organize a community wide church effort, why not contact Rev. Charles Johnson? He is the executive director of **PASTORS FOR TEXAS CHILDREN**, and he has traveled thousands of miles this summer helping school leaders organize for success. He will be happy to meet with your community’s pastors to help them organize to help meet your students’ needs. You can reach him at charlie@charlesfosterjohnson.com. Contact him today. He will thank you!

AMLE2016 IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

TACS is partnering with AMLE to bring the Annual Conference for Middle Level Education to Austin in October! You already know that! This is your link www.amle.org/annual to strategies, ideas, and procedures that will result in higher student achievement. Click it now and get your middle school team on the road to a more successful year! Remember, schools in ESC Regions 12, 13, and 20 register through their ESC for even greater savings!

THE TRAIN TO SAN ANTONIO HAS LEFT THE STATION

You were told last week that the TACS/National IPA-TCPN San Antonio Conference is full. The host hotel has informed us that we have exceeded the capacity allowed by their city ordinances. Registration has closed. Please accept TACS’s thanks for making this annual conference so successful! The attendance of school leaders is critical in making this a memorable event, but the help of our corporate friends who help sponsor it cannot be overlooked.

TACS sends a heart-felt thank you to these friends who are sponsoring the 2016 San Antonio Conference: **National IPA/TCPN; A. Bargas & Associates, LLC; Association Insurance Management (AIM); Boynton Williams & Associates; Government Capital Corporation; Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP; MP2 Energy; NextEra Energy Solutions; Parsons Roofing; Renaissance Learning; Underwood Law Firm, PC; US Employee Benefits Services Group, and Walsh Gallegos Treviño Russo & Kyle, PC** We could not do it without your support!

Barry Haenisch
Executive Director